

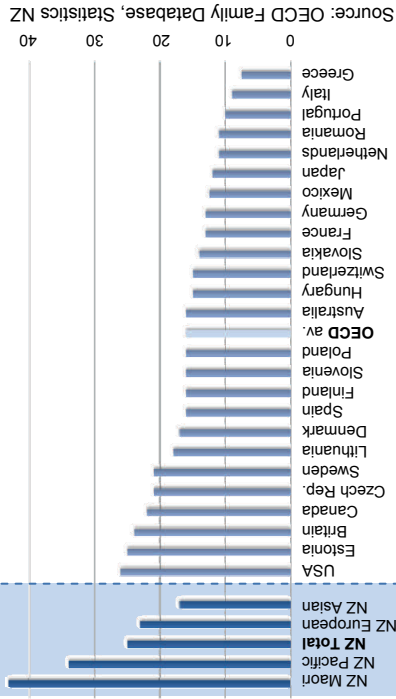
Building a healthy marriage culture is part of the answer and God is central to making that happen



Marriage involves a publicly declared commitment which is a stronger basis for the security which enables children to grow and flourish than uncommitted relationships.

Marriage creates a unit that performs better financially and economically. This not only benefits those in the family but also increases the likelihood of a beneficial impact for society.

Marriage statistics suggest a correlation with lower rates of violence and domestic violence. These are problems that plague our society.



% of children under 15 with sole parents

Source: OECD Family Database, Statistics NZ

And for that matter, who's got use for a carriage these days?

What IS marriage?

But what IS 'love'?

They say that love and marriage go together like a horse and carriage...

Marriage – Why it matters

Healthy marriages are a foundation for strong families and strong communities.

Evidence strongly suggests that outcomes for children, on a range of social and emotional indicators, are better when parents are married. And outcomes for adults who are married are generally better than in other co-habiting arrangements.

Many parents achieve exceptional outcomes despite divorce, bereavement, or children born outside of marriage.

But this does not alter the statistics that show better outcomes for marriage.

Marriage

Why it matters, where it's heading and what we need to do

NZCN | Note M14-01

A Christian understanding

“Because marriage is a gift of the Creator, uniting a man and a woman, and affirmed by Jesus himself, intended for the birth and nurture of children and for building up human families in mutual support and care, it is a lifelong commitment.

“Such marriages generate growth in oneness of heart, body, and mind, and provide stability to family life, so that children are cared for lovingly and grow to full maturity. In this way marriage is foundational to a good society.¹

¹ NZCN Healthy Marriage discussion group, 2013

Marriage

Where it is heading



The rate of marriage has declined over recent decades in favour of casual and de facto relationships. This has gone hand-in-hand with a rise in the rate of divorce.

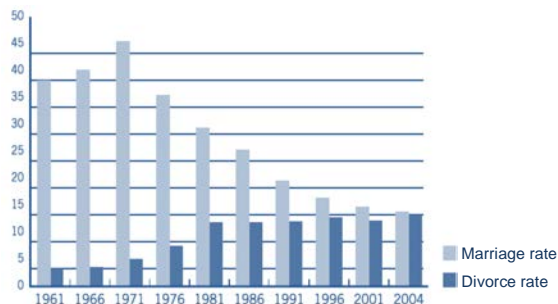
Some people focus on recent challenges to the legal definition of marriage as a factor in the erosion of marriage. But this is more a symptom than a cause of the problem.

Andrew J. Cherlin, Professor of Sociology at Johns Hopkins University, says that two shifts occurred around the start of the 20th century – over 100 years ago – that have had a serious impact on marriage.¹

1. **Radical individualism** – making self-interest the top priority
2. **‘Companionate marriage’** – the notion that marriage is just about adult companionship, exacerbated today by the idea that romantic love is sufficient basis to get married.

¹ Andrew Cherlin, *The-Marriage-Go-Round*, Vintage Books, 2010

Marriage and divorce rates, 1961-2004



Source: Statistics NZ, *Demographic Trends 2005*

Marriage rate per 1000 not-married adults
Divorce rate per 1000 marriages

If the present common attitude to marriage is not changed for a better one that appreciates the importance of marriage, the best we can expect is that the situation will drift along – maybe a bit better at some times, maybe a bit worse at others.

At worst, we may see a continual slide over time away from marriage, from commitment, and from God.

What do we need to do?

- 1 **Commit** to doing what you can to change things.
- 2 **Recognise** that marriage between a man and a woman is part of God's created order. As such it is relevant for everyone – not just Christians or 'religious' people.
- 3 **Learn** about God's purpose, plan, and provision for marriage.
- 4 For those who are married, **commit to building your marriage based on God's plan**, as a model and encouragement to others, and a witness to God.
- 5 **Be available** to help others, especially younger marrieds.
- 6 **Talk about marriage** – especially to those who don't know God or who haven't had good role models
- 7 **Celebrate marriage** - in your churches, and even better – outside your churches, in the community.
- 8 **Work together** – connect to New Zealand Christian Network via the web. If you are able, consider supporting the Network and the work we do promoting Marriage Week.
- 9 **Check out** www.marriageweek.org.nz and mark Marriage Week 7-14 February each year in your calendar
- 10 **Check out** *Towards a Strategy for Building a Healthy Marriage Culture* on www.marriageweek.org.nz.



This is a short paper developed by the Healthy Marriage Discussion group organised by New Zealand Christian Network. Please offer any comments or suggestions you have.

- 11 If you agree with the Christian Marriage Commitment that forms part of that statement, please **go to the website and register your support**. Tell your church and friends about it. www.marriageweek.org.nz

New Zealand Marriage Week